

District 4 election dates set

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District 4 voters will cast ballots April 15 in a primary and May 13 in a general election to fill the County Council seat left empty by the death of Marilyn J. Praisner.

The County Council set the dates in a resolution it approved on a unanimous 8-0 vote Tuesday.

Praisner represented District 4 — which includes all or parts of Ashton, Aspen Hill, Burtonsville, Calverton, Cloverly, Colesville, Derwood, Fairland, Olney, Sandy Spring, Silver Spring,

Spencerville, Wheaton and White Oak — for more than 17 years before her death Feb. 1 of complications following heart surgery.

The candidate who wins the general election will finish Praisner's term, which expires in December 2010.

Because results are not certified until 10 days after an election, the new District 4 council member would not be sworn in to office in time for the council's preliminary budget vote, scheduled for May 15, or its final bud-

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et vote, scheduled for May 22.

Council President Michael J. Knapp (D-Dist. 2) of Germantown talked two weeks ago about scheduling the primary to coincide with a March spring break for the county's public schools. Then, he said he wanted to fill the seat as soon as possible so District 4 residents would have a representative on the council during budget decisions.

But a couple of concerns came up. One, candidates needed more time to campaign. And two, the voting machines might be tied up because of questions on the Feb. 12 presidential primary. That led the council to pick April 15 for the primary.

"It's a difficulty, but you can't solve every problem," Knapp said Tuesday.

Knapp said county officials and Praisner's staff will look out for the interests of District 4, and

he offered to meet with residents himself. Knapp also noted that County Executive Isiah Leggett (D) lives in District 4.

The elections board has not said how many of the 46 District 4 polling places used in last week's primary will be used in the special election. But District voters will be notified at least twice of the election dates and the location where they are assigned to vote.

Asked if council members were worried about holding the primary on the same day as the federal tax filing deadline, Knapp said he had some concern but other council members had not expressed worries in his discussions with them.

Candidates must file with the board of elections by 5 p.m. March 24, Elections Director Margaret Jurgensen said.

By law, the council had to set the special election dates within 30 days of Praisner's death but could not schedule an election within 30 days of the Feb. 12 presidential primary.